



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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"Persecution is part of the Christian life. So it is my honour if I can experience part of the Christian life."
~ Anonymous Middle-Eastern Christian

BURKINA FASO: Church Attack Leaves 24 Dead

Sources: New York Times, CTV, Aljazeera, The Guardian

Gunmen killed 24 people and left at least 18 wounded when they targeted a church service on February 16th in the village of Pansi. Upon entering, the attackers separated the men from the women, as well as locals from non-residents, choosing to kill resident men -- including the church pastor.

After setting the church building on fire, the perpetrators looted local shops and forced three kidnapped youths to transport the stolen goods. Villagers fled to the nearby town of Sebba for safety, but the militants' attacks of violence had taken place there as well.

Earlier this month, other alarming incidents occurred in the same area. Pastor Tindano Omar and five of his family members were forced from their home in Sebba on February 10th. Prior to the abduction, a church deacon had been murdered, and it was his car that had subsequently been used to kidnap the pastor's family. The bodies of Pastor Tindano, his son and two nephews were found three days later. Fortunately, the pastor's two daughters were released unharmed.

Violence in northern Burkina Faso has increased at an alarming rate, as jihadists have sought to use any link to the government or Christianity as justification for murder. Over 1,300 civilians were targeted last year alone, which works out statistically to more than seven times the total of the previous year. To review a previously posted report on the attacks that took place earlier this month, go to www.vomcanada.com/bf-2020-02-13.htm.

Please lift up the Christians of Burkina Faso in your prayers, as they face ongoing threats because of their faith. Pray that the authorities will be able to thwart any further attacks and

provide the country's innocent civilians needed protection. Intercede for the attackers as well, asking God to reveal to them His truths. May they see the compassion of Christ reflected in the countenance of His people -- and the eternal hope that He alone provides -- so that they too may acknowledge their need for God's mercy, forgiveness and salvation.

PAKISTAN: Court Validates Forced Conversion Marriage

Sources: AsiaNews, International Christian Concern, CLAAS

On October 10th, 2019, a 14-year-old Christian girl named Huma Younus was kidnapped from her family's home in Zia Colony, Karachi. A few days later, her family received official conversion papers and a certificate of marriage to her kidnapper, Abdul Jabbar.

The parents took the matter to court. However, Huma, who had been taken 600 kilometres away, was not in attendance at the hearing on November 11th. The family states that the forced marital union contravened the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Law which forbids marriage to any child under the age of 18 without permission from their guardian.

In a disturbing decision on February 3rd, the Sindh High Court took only five minutes to rule that men are permitted to marry underaged girls who have commenced menstruation. This ruling was based on an interpretation of Sharia law, despite the country's contradicting civil law. Huma's family was also prohibited from seeing their daughter because police claimed her life could be at risk if she was forced to attend court.

The family has appealed to the state Supreme Court and a hearing is scheduled for March 4th. The investigating officer has been ordered to examine Huma to determine her age. However, the family's lawyer, Tabassum Yousaf, believes the results are likely to be falsified. The family is greatly concerned for Huma's safety and well-being. Their lawyer emphasizes the importance of the court's urgent intervention: "As time goes by, the less we will know about her fate. Statistics tell us that if pressure is not put on the kidnapper, the minor's fate is always the same: she is forced into prostitution or ends up in the hands of human traffickers."

Thankfully, there are occasions when girls in similar situations are recovered. Sneha, another 14-year-old girl, had also been kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam, and then married to her kidnapper. On January 14th, while returning home from school, Sneha was forced into a vehicle. After being taken to an unknown location, she was tortured and raped multiple times. Thankfully, she was recovered five days later and returned to her family. With the help of human rights advocates, the family is pursuing legal action against the kidnappers but have been forced into hiding for their safety.

For more information on the difficulties facing Pakistan's Christians, as well as reports on other cases of persecution, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Please intercede for Huma, Sneha and the many other girls in Pakistan who have been forced into marriage or prostitution. Ask God to mightily intervene in each situation, rescuing these precious young lives from further assault on their dignity and well-being. May He also provide

them needed healing -- spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. Pray that Huma's family will be successful in their upcoming appeal, so that their daughter can safely return home. Implore that the courts will enforce the country's existing civil laws and not bow to the pressure of militants, and that laws banning forced marriage in general will be implemented as a safeguard to protect others from possible victimization.

INDIA: Children Beaten and Threatened

Sources: Morning Star News, Church in Chains

Christians in the village of Malasamudra, Karnataka were gathered for worship in the early morning of January 19th when 20 Hindu militants from the village came up the steps and began taking photos and videos. Those gathering attempted to stop the intruders from taking pictures of the children but were pushed away. The militants then began to beat the children while restraining the adults. The mob finally left but only after issuing a warning: "If we hear that you stepped out of your homes and told anybody about this, we will set your homes on fire and burn you alive."

In fear, the Christians remained in their homes that day. In the evening, police arrived at the home where the believers had gathered, stating that a complaint had been filed against them. The Hindu villagers claimed they were attacked by the Christians. Under pressure from the village leadership, the police said they had to arrest the Christians to appease the mob. It was only after several hours that the leaders of the mob admitted to instigating the attack. As a compromise, no charges were laid against either side. To read about other incidents of persecution against Christians in India, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Prayerfully uphold these believers as they continue to gather for worship despite the threats of opposing villagers. Pray for the emotional well-being of the children who were affected by this act of violence, and for their families' safety. May India's governing authorities honour those who are dedicated to Christ by acting justly on their behalf and not succumbing to pressure, realizing that all crimes of hate are contrary to the country's constitution and, therefore, should not be tolerated.

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit VOMC's prayer wall at www.vomcanada.com/prayerwall.htm.

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If you would like to encourage someone to read or receive this weekly prayer alert, please use our online form at www.vomcanada.com/pnpforward.htm and help spread the message of the persecuted church around the world.

For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review the list of options at www.vomcanada.com/take-action.htm.